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Emerson reinforces BRE findings

Olivia LeDuc
Beacon Staff

Findings from Emerson’s evaluation from Beyond Racial Equity’s comprehensive report determined that inclusivity and accessibility hindrances still block marginalized students’ experiences at the college.

In an email sent to the Emerson community on Oct. 24, Interim President William Gilligan announced the college will address seven priority areas based on BRE’s findings to strengthen equity, access, and social justice in the next two-to-three years: values and culture, communication and collaboration, leadership, accessibility, retention, accountability, and community.

Emerson employed BRE—an external consultant with expertise in conducting structural and systemic analyses of equity—to finalize its Strategic Review in 2021, cracking down on student experiences during the discovery process to learn of the barriers that exist for marginalized students.

In June 2021, the college released a request for proposals, allowing external consultants to analyze the college’s restraints in fully representing marginalized students. In 2021, Emerson awarded BRE the contract for the strategic review, whose findings flag conversations and themes of equity the Emerson community has been discussing. The process took place during the 2021-22 academic year.

BRE, Pg. 2

According to the report, Emerson demonstrated a desire to recognize the barriers that interfere with the full participation and belonging of marginalized groups within the college community, however, work within the institution remains to systematically improve the student experience.

“The priority areas provide a roadmap from an external perspective to shape priorities and reinforce Emerson’s values of equity, access, and social justice in ways that make us accountable for systemic change,” Poku said.

Strategic and thoughtful change will encourage the college’s commitment to infusing an inclusive community, Poku added.

The priority areas were established in partnership with the BRE project team, the making Emerson IDEAS team, and select students from the presidential advisory group for community and equity.

The making Emerson IDEAS team and students from PAG participated in focus groups and direct interviews with consultants from BRE and provided information and context based on their roles and connections to the college.

BRE’s strategic review process detailed key takeaways for Emerson to integrate an approach that heightens a sense of belonging for BIPOC students, students with disabilities, and students from other marginalized groups.

‘Home away from home’: South Asian students celebrate Diwali on campus

Chloe Els
Beacon Staff

Colorful lights and pulsing music emanated from the Little Building’s Student Performance Center Blackbox last Thursday evening as nearly 20 members of the Emerson community came together to celebrate Diwali.

Traditional Diwali celebrations differ culturally, but universally it is a time of joy spent with loved ones. Diwali lasts for five days, with the fifth day culminating in a large gathering of family and friends. Diwali—also known as a festival of light—is a cross-cultural holiday celebrated by a wide variety of South Asian religions including Hinduism, Sikhism, and Jainism.

Hinduism, Sikhism, and Jainism have strong presences in India and surrounding South Asian countries. Hinduism is the predominating religion with approximately 80% of Indians identifying as Hindu. India’s Sikh population is primarily concentrated in northern India and comprises 1.7% of the Indian population. Jains also make up around 1.7% of India’s population, and live mainly in west India.

Hindus view Diwali as a time to usher prosperity into their lives. To do this, they light small oil lamps called diyas which symbolically welcome Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth.



Members of the Emerson community enjoy dinner and music together to honor Diwali / *Photo* Chloe Els

Diwali is a celebration of freedom for Sikhs honoring Guru Hargobind who fought in 1619, not only for his own freedom after 12 years of wrongful imprisonment, but for the freedom of 52 other princes. In honor of Hargobind’s hard-won liberation, Sikhs light lamps and candles to commemorate the victory of good over evil.

For Jains, Diwali memorializes Tirthankar Mahavira’s attainment of nirvana—spiritual enlightenment. This ascension aided Mahavira in promoting compassion and equity among Jains. Some Jains fast to honor Mahavira and some pray. Many Jains light diyas to symbolize knowledge against

ignorance.

At Emerson, Diwali takes on another variation as South Asian students of various cultural backgrounds organize their own celebration. While the school has not made a distinction between types of Asian students, the Asian population at Emerson has increased from 3% to 5% of the undergraduate student body over the past five years. The number of students specifically from India has increased from 11 to 24 over the same time period.

Tradition, Pg. 3

Opinion: WNBA All-Star misfortuned as Russia’s scapegoat for power



Illustration Hailey Akau

Mariyam Quaisar
Beacon Staff

An eight-time WNBA All-Star and two-time Olympic gold medalist has been in Russian custody since Feb. 17, and was sentenced to nine-and-a-half years in prison in August—all because she entered Russia with less than one gram of hash oil.

Along with her position on the Phoenix Mercury, Brittney Griner has been playing for the Russian team UMMC Ekaterinburg since 2014—hence her trip abroad in the offseason.

Griner was detained at the Sheremetyevo International Airport when customs officials found two vape cartridges with marijuana-concentrate hashish oil—of 0.252 and 0.45 grams—for personal use in her luggage. In Russia,

cannabis is illegal—individuals can be fined or jailed for up to 15 days for possessing less than six grams of cannabis or two grams of hash.

Possessing any more is a serious criminal offense, so why is Griner being sentenced to nine years—ridiculously close to the maximum of 10 years—if she had barely one-tenth of the illegal amount?

Griner’s detainment occurred shortly before Russia invaded Ukraine, with geopolitical tensions making it undoubtedly more difficult to secure her safe release. While the US government and United Nations Ambassador Bill Richardson continue to negotiate terms for Griner’s release, the Russian officials seem to be disinterested in cooperating at this moment. Why? Their heinous desire for power.

Since Russian President Vlad-

imir Putin called an unnecessary war upon Ukraine, his country continues to lose power, money, and people every day. More than 1,000 companies have curtailed or suspended operations in Russia. Bartenders are pulling Russian-made products off their shelves, and several U.S. governors, like Mike DeWine of Ohio and Chris Sununu of New Hampshire, have issued orders restricting sales of some Russian-made vodkas. Several sports federations and leagues have aggressively sidelined Russia’s teams and athletes, including FIFA, who suspended all Russian teams from international competition.

Multiple major sporting events have been relocated from Russian cities—for example, the International Automobile Federation can

Griner, Pg. 5

Lions salvage two goals in dying minutes to survive NEWMAC Quarterfinals

Tyler Foy
Beacon Staff

With less than a minute left in the second half of overtime, the women’s soccer team stared down a one-goal deficit and the end of the 2022 season. Still, after a lucky deflection and a perfectly played one-on-one, the Lions saved their season with two goals in 32 seconds, beating Wheaton College 3-2.

When the whistle sounded at Rotch Field on Nov. 2, 2021, it marked the end of the Lions’ season following a loss to Wheaton. 364 days later, the No. 3 Lions (10-2-5, 4-2-1) had a chance to enact their revenge on the No. 6 Wheaton (7-9-2, 4-5-1) and took it.

“It’s not fun to lose in the quarterfinals, but it was a lesson,” said senior captain Cali Bruce of the Lions’ 2021 defeat. “A big thing was they beat us last year, but this game is not about that. This game is about us.”

Graduate forward Caitlin Johnston didn’t play last season, but made a significant impact scoring two goals—including Tuesday night’s winner.

“[Caitlin] has been a player who made an impact in every single game this season,” said Head Coach David Suvak. “She’s a very attack-minded player and has great vision to find penetrating passes, but she’s also super tenacious on defense.”

As the sun set and the lights shined on a cloudy night at Rotch, it was time for kick-off. The Lions pressured early, taking five shots in the opening 10 minutes.

It didn’t take long for the Lions to break through; in the 19th min-

ute senior midfielder Ainslee Macquarrie dribbled up the left side of the pitch before swinging in a cross that Johnston poked past the Wheaton goalkeeper to give the Lions the lead.

Emerson continued to create high-percentage shots, but couldn’t get past Wheaton’s goalie, who made five saves in the first half. Suvak attributed the pressure on the ball to a change in tactics at the beginning of the season.

“We’ve been working on a style of soccer that is very possession-oriented with attacking-driven defending, using a technique called gegenpressing that all seemed to come together last evening,” Suvak said.

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News

Student-run non-profit promotes sustainability and community

Maeve Lawler
Beacon Staff

Four students in the entrepreneurial studies minor launched Bee the Message, a campus-based non-profit that sells beeswax wraps, donating all profits to The Bee Conservancy.

The business began as a mid-term project for the students' Emerson Experience in Entrepreneurship class, taught by Lu Ann Reeb, the assistant dean and director of the Business and Entrepreneurial Studies program.

Beeswax wraps, made of cloth or biodegradable paper coated in beeswax, serve as infinitely reusable alternatives to single-use plastics and food storage containers. The group, made up of Indigo Pinedo, Senter Bi, Jacqueline Cahill, and Quinten Rowland, sells the wraps for \$5 at its table events or via its pre-order form.

The group's donations to The Bee Conservancy will support the conservancy's mission to protect bees and create "environmental and food justice through education, research, habitat creation, and advocacy," according to its website.

Beyond supporting The Bee Conservancy, the group seeks to bring the Emerson community together by sending messages enveloped the beeswax wraps, what Reeb calls its "value proposition."

"After the pandemic, all of us, not just the students, were in a certain isolation frame of mind," she said. "I think this is what [Bee the Message is] addressing—how to start building that community back."

The non-profit's goals are twofold: to promote sustainability and bring Emerson

students together. Bee the Message held its first table event on Oct. 20 and promoted its product to Emerson students via Instagram. At the table event, the 45 wraps prepared by the group sold out, but students can pre-order wraps at any time.

To market its product to students, Bee the Message centers its catchphrase around "helping save the bees," said Pinedo, a senior creative writing major and group leader. "We started off knowing that it was going to be a non-profit."

Beyond selling a sustainable product, the group hopes to unite Emerson students through kind messages in beeswax wraps.

"We have a whole process where we ask the student if they want to make a message or we make a sweet message for them," said Cahill, a junior marketing communications major. "It's trying to connect Emerson students with one another."

The beeswax wrap comes in various designs, featuring honey bee, honeycomb, and flower-shaped patterns. The group buys the wrap in bulk from Amazon and individually folds and cuts each wrap into an envelope shape with a personalized message inside.

Pinedo acknowledges that sourcing the wrap from Amazon is not the most sustainable option but to meet the mid-term project's deadline the group had to make a compromise.

"Unfortunately, we couldn't find anything that would send the product fast enough for us to start up [on time]. So we had to go through Amazon but some sacrifices must be made," they said.

Although Bee the Message is a business launched for a mid-term project, the students' explorations of entrepreneurship will continue into next semester.

The E3 class is a yearlong, immersive experience for students in the entrepreneurship minor that teaches students how to build and launch a business. Reeb centers the fall semester class around entrepreneurial thinking before launching into the spring semester when students pitch individual business plans. The year will end with a pitch competition in April, where a panel of external judges hears students' five-minute business pitches and award the top three pitches with cash prizes from \$2,000 to \$5,000.

The mid-term project is referred to as the "\$10 Challenge," as Reeb invests \$10 of her own money in each group, introducing students to running a business on a small scale. Students will reimburse her with their profits at the end of the project. In addition, students can each invest \$10—but no more—of their own money to create an even playing field for all groups.

"How you learn and how I teach you is to put you in the situation where you have a certain foundation—I call it layers of learning—about entrepreneurial thinking, and now you're going to do a little bit of it but in a safe environment on campus, not in public," Reeb said.

In the project, students have to consider not only the product to sell but who the consumers will be—students, staff and faculty, or both—as well as marketing and finance.

Reeb has a myriad of experiences in media and entrepreneurial spaces, which she said allow her to teach from experience in the E3 program. After serving as the executive producer at CBS Boston, she founded Boston Media Group, a company that helps various industries find effective communication strategies, and Legal Talk Network, a digital media group for lawyers. Reeb has now been



Top: Cahill, Middle: Pinedo, Left-Right Bi, Rowland. / Graphic Gabel Strickland

teaching the E3 program for eight years.

"Bee the Message came up with a very creative idea," Reeb said. "Emerson students come up with great ideas. I'm always amazed every year."

Landing on the business idea of Bee the Message was a long process, said Pinedo. The group initially wanted to create messages in a bottle, using recycled glass bottles from Emerson's campus. After researching a business for a class assignment, the group drew inspiration from a Vermont-based business called Bee's Wrap—a group that sells beeswax wraps specifically marketed toward storing food.

"I was like, 'Oh my god,' this would actually be a great vessel for doing the same thing that we planned on originally, which was messages to connect people," Pinedo said.

Collaboration is a large aspect of Bee the Message's business, with each member assigned to a specific management task: Pinedo as the team leader, Cahill as the marketing manager, Rowland in charge of finances, and Bi in business research.

"We felt like a lot of Emerson students [are] very supportive of sustainable efforts," said Rowland, a junior business of creative enterprises major. "They like to talk a lot of game, but we gave people an

opportunity to actually show it."

Like her group mates, Bi, a senior visual media arts major, is appreciative of the group's supportive approach to their business efforts.

"I'm very grateful to my team members for supporting very important parts, whether creativity or participation," she said.

Bee the Message is planning a fundraiser event open to all students on Friday, Nov. 11 from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. in the Lion's Den. Buying a wrap in advance of the event serves as a ticket for admission, though tickets will also be sold at the door for \$3. The group is planning to host more table events on campus to sell wraps in the coming weeks.

The group hopes its business is just one way for students to support sustainability.

"I hope in the future that people also support other sustainable efforts that are made [at Emerson]," Pinedo said. "Bee the Message is part of a greater message about sustainability at Emerson."

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Emerson committed to equity, access, and social justice

Cont. from Pg. 1

Poku said the finalized report calls for a response to ensure marginalized identities can thrive at Emerson.

Keeping in recommendation with

the report, the college will create a standing equity, action, and social justice committee composed of the Board of Trustees and will engage key leadership positions within the college in a series of training to reflect on leadership styles, intersectionality, and multiple forms of institutional bias.

Additionally, Emerson will reimagine the PAG to include a more diverse pool of community members and form a retention working group focused on BIPOC, international, marginalized, and disabled students.

The college pledged to invest in more staff positions in student affairs and the Social Justice Center

to improve access in the community, mental health initiatives, and honor the advocates of disability justice, and will invest in resources that track and inform the college that will hold it accountable to its values and aspirations.

Progress on priority areas is a collective responsibility, the email states, but Poku will lead the effort mainly in consultation with the president's council, overseen by Gilligan.

"I am hopeful that the priority areas and our efforts to involve students in many aspects of those areas will increase students' confidence that equity, inclusion, and social justice are values of the college that we are living into daily," Poku said.

Emerson launched the BRE Strategic Review in support of the ES-OCWeekOfAction and Access: Student Disability Union's Action Plan for Disability Justice from November 2020 and April 2021, respectively.

"Conducting the strategic review is one of the ways Emerson intentionally invested time and funds in equity work," Poku said.

Students appreciate "the hands-on and application focus of the college's programs" but believe it is disrupted by Emerson's performative actions from a systemic perspective, the report read.

Both groups were given access to the report and provided feedback that

shaped how the college prioritized the initial key areas for the next few years, Poku said.

The report also highlighted several core areas—compass, culture, leadership, structure and programs, faculty and staff, and communication and marketing—that could improve to amplify student experience in the long term.

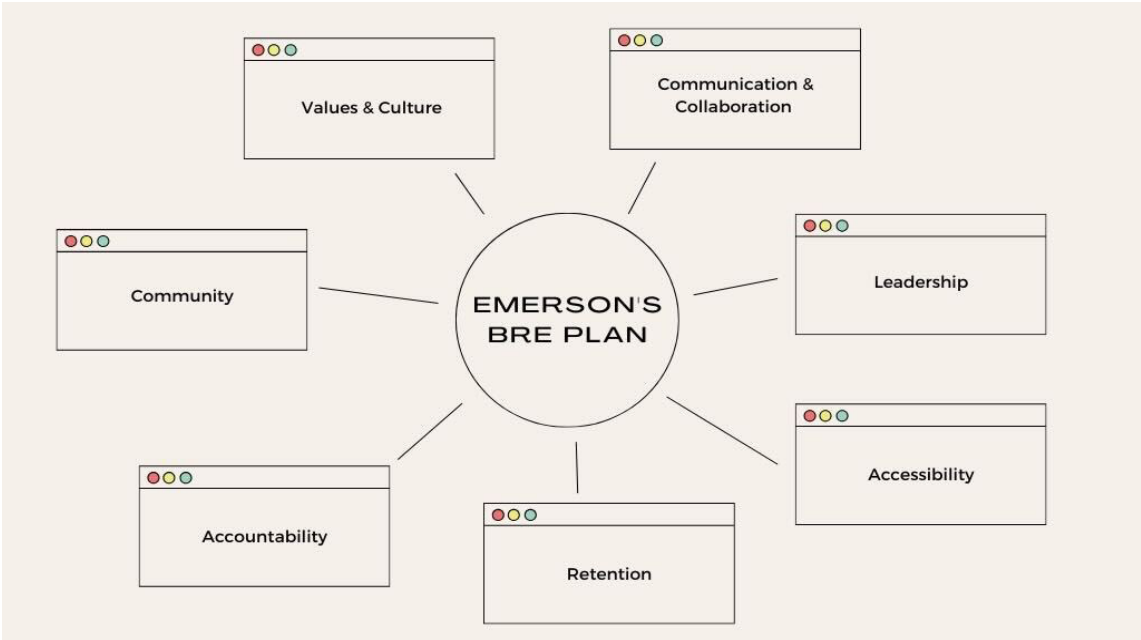
Further, the report concluded Emerson is eager to better understand the blockades that imbalance student experience. However, the challenge for many was uncertainty about how to make improvements for marginalized students.

"The work needed to address the Emerson experience is foundational, deep, and requires a never-ending commitment; there are no shortcuts," the report reads.

Updates on the college's priority commitments will be posted regularly on Emerson's Community Equity Action Plan website, and the Emerson community will be formally updated once a semester.

"Positive institutional change takes all of us," Gilligan wrote in the email. "This will be a community-wide effort where your ideas and assistance will be critical to our success."

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Several prongs of the BRE report. / Graphic Adri Pray

Auditing the auditor’s race: Amore, DiZoglio promise transparency within Auditor’s Office

Adam Spector
Beacon Correspondent

Director of Security and Chief Investigator at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum Anthony Amore—the republican running for state auditor against democratic Massachusetts Senator Diana DiZoglio—pledged to “audit the Auditor’s Office” to ensure transparency.

The state auditor is the chief accountability officer for the state government in Massachusetts, responsible for conducting audits, investigations, and studies to promote accountability and transparency for spending, improving performance, and ensuring the government runs efficiently.

“I care deeply about ensuring the state government has a watchdog to ensure taxpayer dollars are spent wisely. If elected, I will start by launching an independent third-party audit of the Auditor’s Office,” Amore said in a press release.

According to a press release from Amore, the current Auditor’s Office has not met the legal requirement to audit all government agencies on time. Per state law, the office is required to complete an audit—detailing how things are working—of each of the Commonwealth’s 200-plus state agencies every three years.

“As a result, Massachusetts residents have seen avoidable government failures,” said Mark Steffen, Amore’s campaign manager.

“Voters do not benefit from one party, no matter which party it is, controlling all levers of government,” Steffen continued. “That’s how mismanagement and corruption fester. We’ve seen it in solid red states and solid blue states.”

According to Steffen, roughly 68% of state agencies are being audited on time, many of which are not being fully audited every three years.

“[Amore] is going to argue forcefully for reform inside the office to meet its obligations to complete all its audits and get the funding it needs to make sure that happens,” he said. “This includes auditing his own office.”

Amore remains Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker’s sole endorsement in the 2022 election cycle. Connecting Amore to Baker is “key to winning the race,” according to Steffen, as Baker remains one of the most popular governors in the country, citing a 74% approval rating.

“As we’ve seen over almost eight years now with Governor Baker, you have what he calls ‘collaborative friction’—this divided government where you have two teams on the field working together,” Steffen said. “There’s a lot of benefits that come with that... I think that Massachusetts is a great beacon of how bipartisanship can, and should, work.”

Amore commended Baker’s work as governor and mentioned wanting to model his bipartisan approach to elected office after the popular governor.

“Governor Baker and Lieu-

tenant Governor Polito have brought independence to Beacon Hill, and I hope to keep that bipartisanship alive and well if elected,” Amore wrote in an email to The Beacon. “I believe in a two-party government. Checks and balances are something that every one of us learns in elementary school. With the next governor likely to be a Democrat, it will be important that a moderate Republican like me can look over taxpayer spending.”

Amore described himself as an “independent watchdog,” meaning he doesn’t want to inject politics into the job, despite running as a member of the Republican Party.

“A cornerstone of my campaign has been that it is about being professional, not political,” Amore wrote. “I don’t want ideology to get in the way of protecting the taxpayers against waste, fraud, and abuse, nor will I seek to use the power of the office to do anything but measure the performance of the state’s agencies in fulfilling their legally required duties.”

Steffen further emphasized the importance of looking into problems within the Auditor’s Office through a self-described “independent watchdog” candidate like Amore, as it promotes transparency within the position.

DiZoglio—whose campaign staff declined to comment to The Beacon—pledged transparency within the campaign. The press release described a plan to review all agency contracting, starting with the Auditor’s Office, relative to the 25-point inclusion standard adopted by Massport.

DiZoglio plans to further analyze and report on state spending with minority-owned businesses and highlight areas that require improvement.

“Massachusetts currently ranks as the least transparent state government in the nation because access has been reserved for the politically powerful,” DiZoglio wrote. “Our team will spend every working hour searching for, reporting on, and preventing financial loss. We will report on what’s going right and wrong, so the public knows what is being done with their tax dollars.”

Each candidate has prioritized the revision of the Office of the State Auditor’s website, as it would increase and promote public access to government agency audits. Both Amore and DiZoglio believe the website could offer transparency to the public that isn’t currently available.

“We need modern, updated methods of tracking fund disbursement and use,” DiZoglio said. “We want the new website to list the amount and percentage, by spending category, of funds appropriated in near real time.”

Amore’s campaign also discussed updating the auditor’s section on the official Massachusetts website with a more user-friendly site. This includes the ability to search with keywords or agency names to learn more about findings and recommendations from current and past audits.

Members of both campaigns anticipate a close race despite it taking place in a blue state. The Massachusetts state election is on Nov. 8. Early voting has already begun.

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Courtesy Creative Commons



Courtesy Creative Commons

Students embrace tradition

Cont. from Pg. 1

Earlier in the week, students painted diya together in anticipation of the Diwali celebration. They covered the small clay pots in shades of turquoise and yellow, personalizing a traditional symbol.

In the SPC Blackbox, Emerson students flicked on LED candles—an adjustment necessary to comply with Emerson’s fire safety protocols—and placed them inside the hand-painted diya. They arranged the glowing diya on tables and in a wide arc across the floor, marking off a stage for later Bollywood dance performances.

Attendees taped colorful streamers and banners to the walls, casting the room in shades of orange, teal, and purple. Just outside of the Blackbox sat a table laden with Indian foods like aloo gobi masala, pakora, paneer tikka masala, and butter chicken.

Sam Rajesh, a junior visual media arts major and spiritual life senator for the student government association, passed out kaju katli—an Indian sweet made out of cashews.

“We had a bigger turnout this year than last year,” Rajesh said, noting that this is only the second time Emerson has hosted Diwali celebrations.

Rajesh is an international South

Asian student who grew up in Dubai and said she hopes Emerson will continue to host events for South Asian students.

“We’re hoping to open up the Hindu community,” she said. “We want it to be a point of contact for students here at Emerson.”

To share her culture, Rajesh brought her friend Anna Brenner to the festivities. Brenner is a junior journalism major and an international student from China.

Brenner explained that as an international student, attending Emerson has opened her eyes to how difficult remaining connected to your

culture can be. Especially because school breaks do not commonly align with non-Christian holidays.

“Here, you have to plan everything, and that takes a lot,” Brenner said. “You have to work to make things happen.”

Prior to the event, SGA President Pranit Chand said he has been working to establish a South Asian student organization. However, the process has been time consuming, so in the meantime, he has focused on organizing events like the Diwali celebrations.

While there is not an official South Asian student organization

yet, he hopes the celebrations can bring students together and share South Asian culture with the student body.

“It’s a lengthy process,” Chand said. “I hope that can be my contribution to campus.”

As she had dinner with her friends, Urja Patel, a sophomore visual media arts major, expressed her happiness at attending, noting how comforting a culturally familiar event can be.

“I wasn’t [at the Diwali celebration] last year, but I’m glad I’m here now,” Patel said. “This feels like a home away from home now.”

Many of the attendees noted the jump in attendance from this year’s Diwali event compared to last year. The event drew in South Asian students at Emerson, including members of on-campus cultural organization Asian Students In Alliance,



Courtesy Creative Commons



Lighting diya. / Courtesy Creative Commons

who attended to show their support.

ASIA serves as an all-encompassing organization for Asian Emerson students and welcomes South Asian students. However, it is not solely for the South Asian community as it welcomes students of any Asian identity at Emerson.

In the midst of the festivities, with all of the attendees gathered together, Chand thanked everyone for coming and expressed happiness at the increased turnout. He hopes the community can continue to grow even after he graduates in the spring.

“Every year we grow in size, we grow in strength,” he said.

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Opinion

Takeoff is dead. More people should be angry about it.

Hadera McKay
Beacon Staff

On Tuesday, Nov. 1, Kirshnik Kari Ball, better known as rapper Takeoff, was shot and killed outside of a bowling alley in Houston, Texas. As a talented technician and one-third of the popular rap group, Migos, his death at 28 years old has raised another cloud of grief and hopelessness over the Black, rap, and musical communities.

Black artists took to social media to offer their condolences, express their grief, and critique the sociological systems that led to another young Black man’s death. Actor Lakeith Stanfield emphasized the role of gangster music in Takeoff’s death, captioning his Instagram post, “The dangerous toxicity associated with this glorified black serial killer and killed music and imagery got people thinking it’s cool to hurt those that look like them and ONLY them.” Rapper Denzel Curry simply tweeted, “Takeoff ain’t deserve that.”

With all of these Black voices engaging in discourse about the implications of frequent Black male deaths, one can’t help but notice the silence of white people. Another incredibly celebrated and visible Black man has suffered a violent death—another Black man has been murdered—and there is little to no white outrage.

In a time of constant racial reckoning—of new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts and corporate conversations about solidarity and allyship—the lack of active, visible mourning from whites for and with the Black community is disturbing. More than anything, the lack of white attention and conversation around Takeoff is confirmation of performative white activism.

White people will listen to Migos and chant their lyrics, but when the



Illustration Rachel Choi

time comes to acknowledge the repetitive violence their favorite Black rappers face, the chants dim to mere whispers.

Takeoff spent his childhood obsessed with Southern hip-hop artists like Lil Wayne and Gucci Mane. His inspiration fueled the creation of the budding rap group Migos with his uncle Quavious Keyate Marshall and cousin Kiari Kendrell Cephus, better known as Quavo and Offset respectively. Together, they produced some of the most commercially successful, game-changing, and party-starting projects both in Atlanta rap specifically and in the rap industry nationally.

From the breakout national success

of 2013’s “Versace” on the group’s early independent mixtape, “Jung Season,” to the wealth of bangers on the Grammy nominated album “Culture” and its sequel, “Culture II,” the Migos proved themselves a force with token layered adlibs and a demonstrated knowledge of the relationship between melody and rhythm. Songs like “Bad and Boujee,” “T-Shirt,” “Walk it Talk it,” and “I Get the Bag,” were the theme songs of my young teenage years. I spent school dances watching my white peers dance poorly to “Narcos” and “Stir Fry.”

This is perhaps the most frustrating reflection of white activist performance—white people are among the

highest consumers of rap music, yet lack the capacity to grieve seriously when someone from that community has fallen. Black rap artists are good enough to listen to, emulate, and appropriate, but they’re not human enough to mourn? Whites can only seem to reach as far into Black culture and humanity as their pride lets them. If white people are not benefitting from Black culture and expression—and that includes the expression of pain and grief—they don’t want it.

Time and time again, Black people and artists are faced with sudden violent deaths and harm. From Nipsey Hussle, to Pop Smoke, to Juice WRLD, to XXXTentacion, and PnB

Rock, the list goes on and on. Time and time again, Black people must extend their trail of grief, and time and time again the disappointment for the lack of acknowledgement from white people grows.

Why do white people have to be asked to care about things that are not simply distinctly Black, but distinctly human?

If whites do not react strongly to the death of a Black male figure that they’ve popularized and consumed more than any other demographic, then what makes us think they will fight against the injustice of commonplace Black death across the country?

No one is asking white people to start posting empty stock photos of Takeoff on their Instagrams with droning, emotional captions, nor are they asking them to start riots in the street. It is not unreasonable to ask the racially privileged to develop the basic human empathy it takes to care about the murder of a Black man—even though he is not a part of your community, even though he doesn’t look like you, even if you didn’t listen to a single one of his songs—and to think about the societal implications of a Black man’s violent murder.

A word of advice to white allies: it is not simply the moments of national racial reckoning that facilitate a need for solidarity, it is also in these small, powerful moments of Black pain. Sometimes allyship does not manifest in protest, sometimes it manifests in taking the time to come outside of yourself and attempt to understand the weight of an experience that isn’t yours.

Learn how to decenter yourself from the narrative, and simply mourn our many losses with us.

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Wisconsin women’s volleyball deserves your respect

Vivi Smilgius
Beacon Staff

After a dynamic week of Big 10 play, the University of Wisconsin women’s volleyball team advanced to no. 3 in the American Volleyball Coaches Association poll. The team ascended two spots after a clean sweep against the—formerly—no. 1 University of Nebraska Cornhuskers, and a four-set win over the no. 9 University of Minnesota Golden Gophers.

With over 7,000 spectators at their home-court UW Fieldhouse, the Badgers tallied their 10th consecutive win against the Golden Gophers. At 17-3 overall and 11-1 in-conference, Wisconsin currently tops the Big 10—one of, if not the most, competitive volleyball conferences in the nation.

The Badgers are pretty f#%&ing good.

But Wisconsin’s success has been both tainted and popularized after explicit photos taken following the team’s 2021 national championship win were leaked this October. While intentionally explicit, the photos were taken on a player’s phone in a private setting during a moment of celebration. The UW-Madison Police Department is currently seeking the person who leaked the photos and is not investigating the student-athletes.

Some attribute the recent jump in Wisconsin women’s volleyball game attendance to the scandal, while others take to social media and sports blogs to joke about the leaked pictures. As usual, these jokes quickly become sexual and illegal, with hun-

dreds of social media users circulating the players’ photos and videos, while others called on more teams to leak their own alleged photos. The topic started trending on TikTok and Twitter, and continues to tally dozens of videos and tweets daily.

Social media makes it feel like everyone’s in on the joke, but the group of young, female athletes whose private photos were shared nonconsensually online faces the brunt of the brutality. While it is literally illegal to share these photos, it is also unethical—and it feeds into a larger commentary of society’s perception of female athletes.

“Media tend to represent women athletes as women first and athletes second,” stated the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in a video report. “Coverage of women in sports is often dominated by references to appearance, age or family life, whereas men are depicted as powerful, independent, dominating, and valued as athletes.”

While audiences are growing, women’s college volleyball is not the most popular sport—a reality highlighted every time ESPN airs high school football on its main channels and exiles women’s college sports to ESPN2 and 3. With game times on Friday evenings and during the day on Sundays, women’s volleyball is often overshadowed by a night at the bar or a day full of NFL matchups. According to UNESCO, sports participants are about 40% female, but women receive a mere 4% of coverage. Female volleyball players are among the many athletes constantly pushed to the back burner.

When competition is out of sight, celebration is out of mind. Think of the famous post-victory locker room photos taken of male athletes. One image that comes to mind is the iconic snapshot of Chicago Bulls legend Michael Jordan, sobbing joyfully over a trophy after winning his first NBA championship in 1991. Plenty include cigars, champagne, and shirtlessness.

Now, think of the famous post-victory photos taken of female athletes, if there are even any that come to mind. Why aren’t women allowed to celebrate the way men can—especially in the privacy of their locker room?

The great disparity of respect given to female and male athletes is rooted in misogyny. On college campuses and at professional levels, women athletes receive mere percentages of the respect and payment given to their male counterparts. Women athletes’ hard work and talent is constantly undermined by couch-dwellers who are convinced they could beat a WNBA player in a game of 1-on-1 even though they can’t win a game of NBA2K.

Consider the vast difference between facilities at the men’s and women’s NCAA basketball tour-



Illustration Rachel Choi

naments in 2021, or the pay gap between the U.S. women’s soccer team, a three-time World Cup winner, and the U.S. men’s team, who’s yet to win the cup at all. Women athletes consistently receive a lack of resources, funding, and coverage—unless it serves to fetishize their bodies.

On top of that, the coverage female athletes do receive is often negative, not celebratory. (A Google search for “men’s sex scandals” produces links to four websites selling sandals before a link to the “11 Biggest Sports Scandals of All Time” arises, while a search for “women’s

sports scandals” results in a report of long-time sexual abuse against female collegiate soccer players.)

The case of the Wisconsin volleyball team is no exception, but it should be. The team’s performance provides an opportunity for audiences to appreciate women’s volleyball at an unparalleled level. After winning their first national title last season, the Badgers have continued on their upward trajectory—and they should receive the attention they deserve.

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Food fights will not save the planet

Hailey Akau
Beacon Staff

Real-life food fights are rare—for good reason.

In addition to wasting a perfectly good meal, throwing food in any context creates unnecessary and disgusting cleanup work and ultimately achieves nothing for an argument. So, it should come as no surprise that vandalizing works of art by throwing food at them is an extremely ineffective way to draw legitimate attention to environmental issues.

From Monet to Banksy, we have seen artists destroy their work for the purpose of communicating a larger message to their audience. Recently, climate activists started throwing food—tomato soup, cake, mashed potatoes—at famous works of art housed in European museums to draw attention to the current, global environmental issues. These acts of vandalizing art for the sake of a larger cause are significantly less effective when the artist is not the one making the decision to damage their work.

One of the groups involved in the food-throwing incidents is the U.K.-based organization Just Stop Oil, whose primary focus is “to ensure that the government commits to ending all new licenses and consents for the exploration, development, and production of fossil fuels in the U.K.” The group’s website justifies its methods of civil disobedience as a means of bringing forth change.

The majority of Just Stop Oil’s peaceful protests consist of roadblocks and sit-ins on major streets in London, but the nonviolent acts of civil disobedience have recently escalated to vandalizing display windows of high-end retailers and throwing food at famous works of art, like Van Gogh’s Sunflowers.

While the acts have drawn international attention and sparked major controversy among art and climate justice communities, none of the defaced artworks have been seriously damaged since they are protected by glass panes and frames. However, if the trend of publicly defacing art continues, these priceless pieces could see irreversible damage in the future. While some may argue that art serves little function in modern society, visual art illustrates the human experience through a creative medium and moves people on deeper,

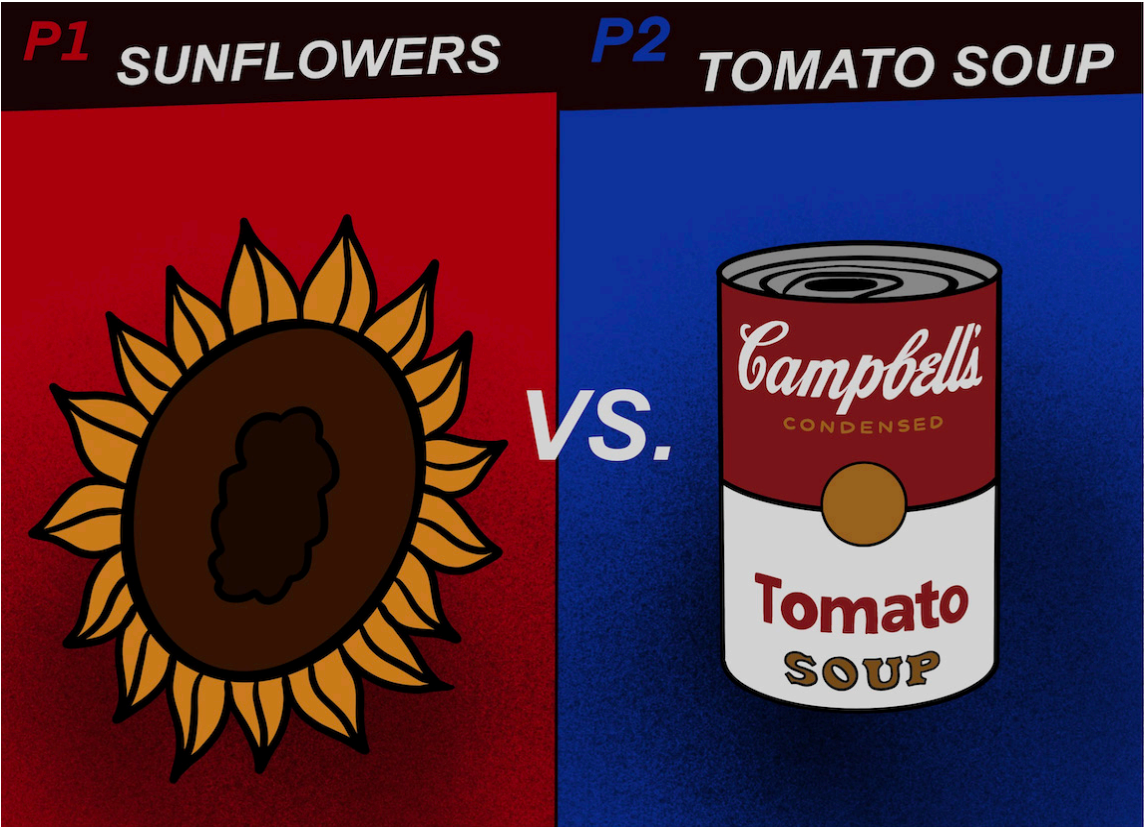


Illustration Hailey Akau

emotional, or intellectual levels. Additionally, some of these iconic pieces, like Da Vinci’s Mona Lisa, influenced creative movements throughout history and revolutionized contemporary art. The question arises: does this attack on art bring the right attention to climate change?

These stunts aim to draw people’s attention to the current climate crisis through nonviolent civil disobedience. In a Q&A on its website, Just Stop Oil defends its food-throwing campaign saying “attacking what people really care about pushes them to ask hard questions [about their values].” However, it is hard to see the correlation between appreciated art and the state of the climate crisis.

There is no “right” way to protest. But throwing food at artwork pales in comparison to dumping tea into harbors or marches at national capitals, or most other demonstrations for social justice, for that matter.

Furthermore, targeting priceless works of art from museums located in predominantly-white, privileged countries throughout Europe is an extremely

insensitive form of protest compared to the uncredited efforts of marginalized communities who are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis.

In an article for the nonprofit group Green America, Beverly Wright, CEO of the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice at Dillard University, said that “[communities of color] are on the front line of impacts from climate change, living in places where there could be more floods and a higher incidence of different diseases.” Wright also explained how poorer communities lack access to resources that reduce the effects of climate change on their everyday life.

Most of the public responses to the recent food-throwing stunts have been negative. Rather than keeping the focus on the activists’ message, defacing artwork simply turns the masses against the vandals who have attacked something considered sacred to human culture. The videos of these attacks on art rely mainly on shock factor for viral attention, and people wind up focusing primarily on the destruction rather than the purpose. While these provoc-

ative forms of protest have succeeded in garnering international attention, the concern is that this method of protest overshadows the cause.

In an article for the Associated Press, climate scientist Michael Mann said that the stunts “will draw negative associations with climate advocacy and activism,” which is exactly what is happening. Regardless of the intention behind the food-throwing campaigns, the public will simply view the participating activists as vandals. Drawing attention to the issue of climate change can work to build support for these groups and gain the numbers to make real progress, but property damage cannot substitute for a solid argument.

It is clear that action is already being taken to combat climate change—albeit the efforts may be insufficient—so why target something that has almost no relation to the battle being fought? While climate change is a legitimate issue that needs to be addressed, the lack of public awareness is not the root of the problem. The climate action page for the U.N. website lists burning fossil fuels and greenhouse gas emissions

as the two primary causes of climate change.

According to the 2022 Emissions Gap Report by the U.N. Environment Programme, the top countries emitting the most greenhouse gases per capita include the United States, Russia, China, Brazil, Indonesia, the EU27, and India. Among these countries, the U.S. remains the top country with per capita greenhouse gas emissions, which is unsurprising considering the proliferation of market-based solutions, like carbon pricing, for climate change that tailor to a capitalistic society.

Additionally, “greenwashing” has become a recent phenomenon in which companies mislead their customers into believing their products are environmentally sound. Corporations known for greenwashing include BP, Exxon-Mobil, Coca-Cola, and Volkswagen—companies whose products are mostly used in predominantly-white, higher privileged countries.

While the issue of climate change is far from resolved, government plans of action and global agreements are already being discussed and implemented to address the problem, so it is clear that the focus on garnering public attention may be a misconstrued solution to the real issue. According to the United Nations website, the main categories for addressing climate change are “cutting emissions, adapting to climate impacts, and financing required adjustments.” Considering the disproportionate causes and impacts of climate change, it is clear that most of the heavy lifting must be done by the dominating countries who contribute the most to the climate crisis.

It’s entirely possible that some people will be riled up enough by the sight of tomato soup on a Van Gogh to join the cause, but it’s difficult to see how defacing precious works of art will call for more substantial government action against environmental issues.

As art is an irreplaceable means of human creative expression, it should be protected and revered as a form of documenting the history of humanity—not smeared with mashed potatoes as a means of forming an argument. While climate change is a serious and pertinent issue, turning the conversation into a food fight is no way to advocate for a realistic or viable solution.

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Brittney Griner detention by the Russian government is unfounded

Cont. from Pg. 1

celebrated its Russian Grand Prix. Many are boycotting Russian entertainers, as opera singer Anna Netrebko was forbidden from performing at New York’s Metropolitan Opera and Russian delegations were disinclined from the Cannes Film Festival. Tech giants restricted access to Russian state-owned news outlets like Sputnik across the European Union. Even the International Cat Federation banned Russian cats from entering any international competitions.

While it is true that Griner should have been aware of the specific laws before entering Russia, it is also true that she is receiving a punishment far harsher than those who have committed worse crimes. Griner was granted an appeal date for Oct. 25, where one of her lawyers argued that the “punishment imposed on Griner does not correspond to the gravity of the crime.” Another lawyer stated that nine years in prison is not in line with international legal norms and even outside the norm of the Russian legal system. A



Courtesy Creative Commons

Russian court denied the appeal for a reduced prison sentence.

Nine years in prison for the amount of cannabis oil she had, especially after pleading guilty and the court’s acknowledgement of her athletic status, is a power play to put Russia back on top, specifically at a time when the U.S. is at odds with Russia over the war in Ukraine. So far on top that U.N. ambassadors and Biden might have to beg to bring home a

woman who should have been released months ago—or never even detained.

At Griner’s hearing on Aug. 2, her lawyers even argued that the state-appointed forensic expert who examined the cartridges found in her luggage made technical and procedural errors. When another forensic expert was called to testify, he said that “the examination [of the cartridges] does not comply with the legislation

regarding the completeness of the study and does not comply with the norms of the [Russian Criminal] Code.”

This whole case appears to be a horribly-made movie where everything is one large question to the point of audience frustration.

Griner has spoken to her wife, Cherelle, on the phone just twice since February—the first time, providing relief from hearing each other’s voice, and the second time, leaving the couple in tears for days. Griner’s family feels as though they will never see her again, her teammates and coaches are at a loss for words, and fans are grappling with the fact that an incredibly accomplished athlete has been stripped of her freedoms because she’s caught in the crossfire between Russia and its ego.

While Griner sits in a small cell with two other English-speakers—permitted to shower twice a week and given one-hour of outside time—she is rapidly losing hope of being able to go home. Even if she is able to return to the U.S., what price will her freedom cost her?

The Biden administration of-

fered to free the imprisoned Russian arms dealer Viktor Bout—nicknamed the “Merchant of Death”—to secure the release of Griner and another wrongfully imprisoned American, former U.S. Marine Paul N. Whelan who was sentenced to 16 years in prison in 2020 for espionage charges. Bout was accused of supplying arms to Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and rebels in Rwanda. How is the freedom of Griner and Whelan equivalent to that of a man who inspired a film titled “Lord of War,” a man who conspired to kill innocent people? It is simply not. So allow me to be the one to ask: what the hell is going on?

Russia has not only imprisoned innocent people to exert power over the United States as its country’s image continues to deteriorate from the backlash of the war, but is also using that power as a gateway to bring home a nefarious criminal. Griner’s mental health is rapidly declining, and Putin’s slimy wheels are turning as he works to recover from his losses—losses that he has caused.

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Living Arts

“Comics of Color” to give platform to POC performers

Sophia Pargas
Beacon Staff

A live comedy-variety show invites people of color to share their comedic talents through sketch, improv, and stand-up. The event, hosted by Stand Up in the Park, will take place on Thursday, Nov. 3 at 8 p.m. in the Lion’s Den, and all are invited to attend and take part in the fun.

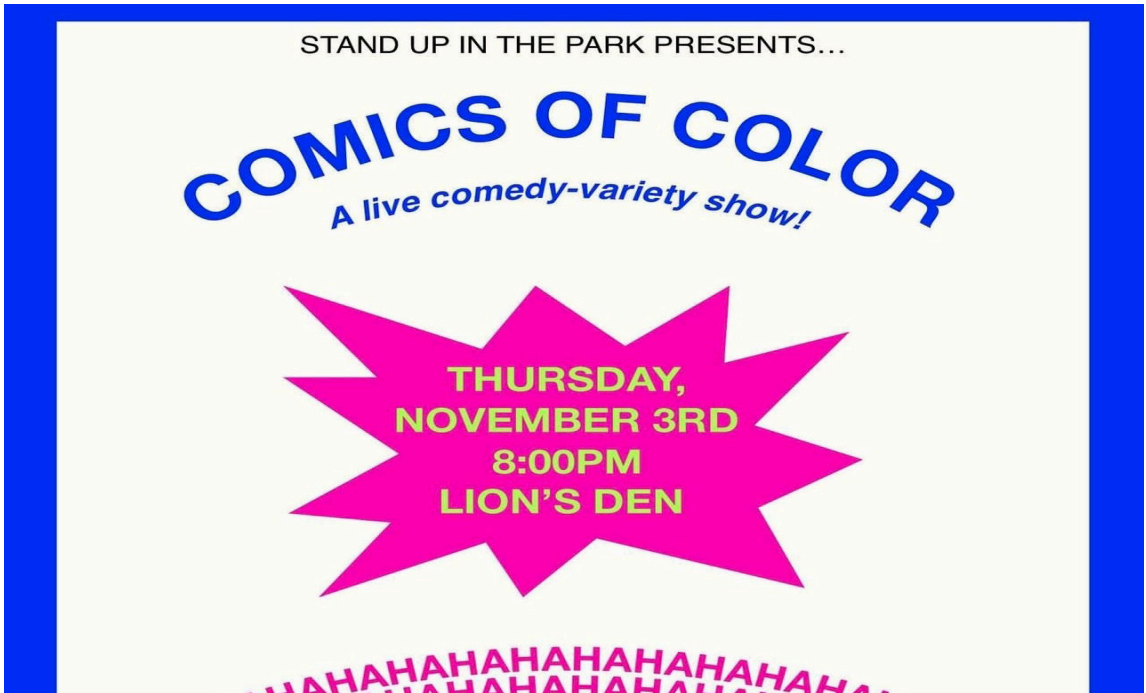
“The event will introduce a few different skits, some performers doing stand up and improv,” Sophie Canon, a freshman comedic arts major and Comics of Color host, said. “You can expect themes of race to be described in the comedy and also just silliness, wackiness, and a fun time put on by people of color.”

The inspiration behind the show came from a past effort to make the Emerson comedy scene more inclusive, as is described by senior comedic arts major and Comics of Color producer Breanna Nesbeth.

“I was on board for Stand Up in the Park and last year, we had a woman and nonbinary comic show, and it went really well,” Nesbeth said. “When we made plans for what shows we wanted to do this semester, I proposed that we do a Comics of Color show.”

Nesbeth describes the necessity of shows such as this one to give minority communities a platform to express themselves in a space where this opportunity comes few and far between.

“The need is that Emerson is pre-



Flyer for “Comics of Color.” / Courtesy Breanna Nesbeth

dominantly white, and the Comedic Arts department is even more overwhelmingly white,” Nesbeth said. “We just have so many talented comedians of color who unfortunately get very absorbed into the masses of who make up the majority of comedians here. I thought the show was really important to highlight their performance and only their performances.”

This is a sentiment echoed by Canon, who described her own experience as a person of color in a

program where there are few.

“Most of my classes are dominated by white men,” Canon said. “Stand Up in the Park and the majority of [their] performers are white men; there’s not a lot of comics of color and they’re often not given the platform. The industry today and the world today [have] never been for people of color, so it’s nice to have moments [with] more of a space to talk about political, social, and moral issues openly.”

Similarly, Canon speaks from

personal experience, explaining that the show allows people of color the opportunity to perform without fear of judgment.

“It alleviates the stress of being the only performer in the set that talks about something controversial or serious,” Canon said. “I find myself often in that position and it can sometimes be jarring because it’s like oh, someone’s talking about constipation after me. It’s fun to tackle social issues through comedy, so it’s nice to be given more of an

outlet to do that where people are expecting it.”

The hope for the show is not only to have a great time, but also to ensure performers of color leave fulfilled and empowered.

“I’m looking for a success that’s as great as or even greater than the woman and nonbinary comic show,” Nesbeth said. “[We want to] highlight these marginalized comics and really just make sure that the performers feel like they did a great job and they feel really comfortable. That’s my number one priority.”

Students are encouraged to attend the show and enjoy comedy in a way it is not shared enough. According to Nesbeth, the show will be groundbreaking for even the most experienced comedians.

“It’s a great opportunity to see what Emerson comics have to offer outside of what you’d normally see,” Nesbeth said. “You just don’t know what to expect from comedy that comes from outside of the bounds that you’re used to.”

All who attend are promised a night of fun, laughter, and silliness that will lift spirits and spread joy.

“There’s so many lovely sketches in line that are gonna make people laugh,” Canon said. “There’s gonna be juggling, there’s gonna be tricks and just the energy is gonna be high and people are having fun. Why wouldn’t you want to get in on that?”

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Taylor Swift is the ‘Mastermind’ behind ‘Midnights’

Clara Faulkner
Beacon Correspondent

At midnight on Oct. 21, students all throughout Little Building were playing Taylor Swift’s newest album during the apex of its debut. Since the release, students across campus have sported memorabilia in support of Taylor Swift for her 10th studio album.

“Midnights” is Swift’s most complicated and sophisticated album yet, with songs ranging from sensuous ballads to self-loathing and exuberant choruses.

The album begins with “Lavender Haze,” a gloomy, melancholy track about the experience of falling in love. Swift attributes the song’s genesis to the television series “Mad Men,” creating a liberation and intimate connection.

Swift manages to introduce the theme of pivotal awakening, while shaping contemporary feminism through lyrics that address the stereotype of 1950s housewives.

Swift has been a pioneer in the music industry. Following the release of “Midnights,” she became the first artist to hold all top-10 positions on the Billboard Hot 100 list, eliminating every male artist on the list.

Swift continues this feminist construction through the second song, “Maroon.” The singer-songwriter utilizes deeper shades of red to represent the evolution of her perspective on romantic relationships and the sacrifices she made.

The third track, “Anti-Hero,” on the other hand, acts as a self-loathing anthem that discusses the public pressure that comes with being in the limelight at a young age. “I’ll stare

directly at the sun but never in the mirror” is one of the many lyrics that creates an ideal combination of conscience and artistic aptitude, while also promoting individual accountability.

The only collaboration on the album, “Snow On The Beach,” features world-renowned musician Lana Del Rey, who employs imagination and romantic imagery. Swift and Del Rey argue about the duplicity of love and the difficulty of being desired.

The track “You’re On Your Own, Kid” is distinctive from the rest of the album as it blends the sentimentality of first love with the pain of rejection. Swift explores the impact of her personal growth on her relationships through a series of ingenious wordplays.

This may be why Swift wanted the suffering in her next song, “Midnight Rain.” The words “He wanted it comfortable, I wanted that pain” highlight Swift’s attempts in “Lavender Haze” to strive for herself in the music industry and refuse to settle for a plush life.

Swift’s next track, “Question...?,” describes this luxurious existence as “Good girl, sad boy, big city, wrong choices.” Swift repeatedly asks her ex-lover in the track whether their current relationships are as gratifying as the one they experienced. This track may admit there is much to celebrate in the journey of moving on, but in her next track she confesses that craving revenge is a virtue.

Swifties believe “Vigilante Shit” represents Swift’s triumph over investor Scooter Braun, who bought Taylor’s master recordings causing her to lose all rights to her own works. It is a sinister and alluring composi-



Graphic Clara Faulkner

tion with low, lethargic harmonies that communicate the message “don’t get sad, get even.”

Swift desires a sense of vengeance, but she still believes in sparkling despite her experiences in her next track, “Bejeweled.” The track is an empowering feminist anthem that encourages women to go from the “basement to the penthouse.” As a call to action for women everywhere, Swift is urging them to cut ties with toxic partners.

Her next track, “Labyrinth,” diverts into the terror of falling in love as a tender, heartfelt ballad about her romantic anguish at not being able to find “the one,” and how she ultimately did. The lyrics are sung softly, like a love hymn, giving the music a charming wedding ballad touch to celebrate Joe Alwyn, the love of her

life for the past seven years.

Swift uses the following song, “Karma,” to put an end to her feud with her critics. Her lyrics, “Karma is my boyfriend, Karma is a god,” demonstrate how she has remained unfazed by her many public scandals and failed relationships.

Alwyn co-wrote her next song, “Sweet Nothing,” a track that is an analogy for the meaningless sweet nothings spoken in the company of one’s beloved. It is a gentle ballad in which Swift appreciates the adult life she has built for herself, especially her current honest and fresh relationship with a partner who does not require anything from her except devotion.

Swift admits that meeting Alwyn was not a coincidence on the closing track of her album, “Mastermind.”

As Swift puts it: “I’ve been scheming like a criminal ever since to make them love me.” Swift perfectly blends the turbulence of the media’s pressure with her personal love story in this track.

The album is a flawless portrayal of a forlorn girl pursuing the love of her life while enjoying life and seeking revenge on her detractors. It is not surprising that Swift has remained up all night with these experiences—it would wear anyone down. With these experiences in mind, Swift has delivered a cohesive album that evokes feelings of comfort, wrath, and adoration. Throughout “Midnights,” Swift truly has proven to be the “Mastermind” of it all.

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Musical Theatre Society to host Fights AIDS Gala

Parker Garlough
Beacon Staff

In collaboration with Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, the Emerson Musical Theatre Society will host a series of fundraisers to support those affected by HIV and AIDS.

The annual event will begin with a night-at-the-movies-themed dinner gala on Nov. 4 at 6 p.m., immediately followed by a cabaret featuring songs from several classic movie musicals. The next day at 2 p.m., Broadway persona Grey Henson will conduct a virtual masterclass and Q&A session. Donations between \$5 and \$20 per participant are requested, and all proceeds will be donated to BCEFA.

The BCEFA financially supports over 450 organizations across the U.S.—including Fenway Community Health Center, Greater Boston Food Bank, Rosie’s Place, and Victory Programs, Inc., which collectively received a total of \$67,500 from last year’s fundraiser.

Community Engagement Coordinator Taylor Mattes describes



Courtesy Samantha Duggan

the BCEFA’s hope to brighten the lives of those suffering from HIV and AIDS.

“AIDS is always going to be at the heart of our mission because that’s how we were created,”

Mattes said in an interview with The Beacon. “But now it’s not

so much about reactionary treatment. It’s about helping those living with and affected by AIDS to maintain it as a livable condition.”

Sophomore business of creative enterprises major Samantha Duggan is the producer for the gala, cabaret, and masterclass. This role involves coordinating logistics and facilitating communication between all involved in the fundraising events. On the day of the gala, she will be setting up decorations, collaborating with the stage manager, checking in guests, and problem-solving.

“We are sold out, so I’ve been putting people on a waitlist,” Duggan said. “I’m just hoping we have enough room so everyone who wants to see the show can see the show.”

During the masterclass portion of the fundraiser, Grey Henson will critique six participants’ audition materials. Henson is best known for his roles as Damian Hubbard in “Mean Girls: The Musical” and Elder McKinley in “The Book of Mormon.”

“Grey is a wonderful [LGBTQ+] advocate, and he is a very prominent figure in the Broadway com-

munity as well,” Duggan said.

Per Mattes’ suggestion, the gala will allow people to purchase theater memorabilia in a silent auction.

“Selling your own posters, your own playbills, and props from your show set pieces is a great way to make it really personal. Broadway Cares was also able to donate signed Broadway posters as well,” Mattes said. “Samantha was looking for something different to do at the event that they hadn’t done previously, which is why a silent auction became part of the conversation.”

Mattes provides similar support for many schools, regional theaters, and other organizations through her role at the BCEFA. She described the value of fundraising not just for the benefactors but also for those who give back and support the larger cause.

“It’s so easy to get caught up in the cycle of auditions and everything, so having a goal for making a difference is very beneficial,” Mattes said. “If you’re fundraising with Broadway Cares, you are a part of the theater community at large. If you’re doing red buck-

et fundraising, you’re doing the same fundraising the Broadway community is doing, so my goal is to bring everybody together for this one common goal. That’s what I do here.”

Mattes encourages students interested in staying involved with BCEFA after the gala to join the Bucket Brigade. Following a speech made by a cast member about BCEFA’s mission, Bucket Brigade volunteers collect cash donations in red buckets at the exit of theater performances. Appeals are conducted in two six-week periods: one in the spring and one in the fall. The current fundraising period runs from Oct. 21 to Dec. 4.

Emerson students have worked with BCEFA for over a decade to host the Fight AIDS gala and cabaret. This year, they hope to be able to raise \$1500, after surpassing their initial goal of \$1200. Tickets to each event can be purchased at <https://linktr.ee/mts.emerson>.

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The faces of the Boston Asian American Film Festival

Ryan Yau
Beacon Correspondent

The annual Boston Asian American Film Festival was held in the Paramount Theatre from Oct. 20 to Oct. 31. This year’s program contained three narrative films, three documentaries, and various shorts from Asian American filmmakers, many of whom made appearances for post-screening Q&As.

BAAFF was one of the first external organizations to screen films in the Paramount Theatre—David Dower, former artistic director of ArtsEmerson, allowed the festival to use the theater as a primary venue in 2013. The organizations have been linked ever since.

The festival was established in 2008 by Susan Chinsen, who currently serves as director. Aside from her managerial duties, her role includes scouting films from other festivals to be included in the program and reaching out to filmmakers with a focus on contemporary issues.

“Our curation is rooted a lot in listening and trying to pay attention to what’s important to the community here in Boston and across the country, especially for Asian Americans,” Chinsen said.

BAAFF is one of many Asian-American-centric film festivals that are part of an informal coalition. San Francisco’s CAAMFest is the largest annually, and New York’s Asian American International Film Festival is the longest running. Other festivals are held in Vancouver, Houston, and Toronto.

The festivals contribute to a growing acknowledgement of Asian American culture in popular media by financially backing artists in the community and platforming their work. Recent mainstream movies like “Crazy Rich Asians” and “The Farewell” demonstrate a greater demand for Asian and Asian American stories.

“We’re celebrating not that the stories are necessarily perfect, but the fact that they are being told,” Chinsen said. “There needs to be more people telling those stories so that we have a diversity of it, so that we don’t feel like we’re resting everything on the shoulders of this one film or this one filmmaker.”

Through BAAFF, Chinsen hopes to raise important discussions about intersectional issues including the Asian American community, with stories that haven’t received much time in the spotlight.

“It’s a way to bring people into

very difficult conversations,” Chinsen said. “Through film, especially through an artist’s voice, it’s a lot easier because you can sort of put it out there and then use that as a pint of reference to build a conversation from other Asian American-centric film festivals.”

Jason Karman’s feature directorial debut “Golden Delicious” was screened as the penultimate showing of the festival on Oct. 23. Based on writer Gorman Lee’s screenplay, the film centers Jake, an Chinese-Canadian teenager who is pressured to pursue basketball by his father. Intersectionally, he realizes he is gay as he falls for Aleks, the boy next door.

Though writer Gorman Lee conceptualized the plot, the movie is an amalgam of Lee and Karman’s experiences growing up as Asian Americans.

“Gorman respected my point of view, so we regularly communicated,” Karman said. “Jake’s queer experiences were informed by my own queer experiences. What you see is the merging of two experiences into something that is original but also grounded.”

The two experiences converge as Jake starts practicing basketball with Aleks, an activity that was miserable with his father. He fulfills his father’s wishes by making the team, but is forced to grapple with his unacknowledged feelings.

Cardi Wong plays Jake and Chris Carson plays Aleks, alongside Parmiss Sehat, Ryan Mah, and Lee-ah Wong, among others—many of whom have not yet starred in feature films.

“Many of them have not had a chance to work on a feature film or be in a leading role,” Karman said. “It was really gratifying to see them finally getting some recognition for their talent because they seem to [only] be cast as the supporting person or the best friend.”

As a gay man coming out in the ‘90s, Karman turned to cinema for representation. In doing so, however, he noticed a distinct lack of movies with queer Asian characters.

“I was inspired by queer films because that gave me hope,” Karman said. “But I was exposed to mainly white gay stories, I didn’t see too many queer Asian stories. I didn’t see a lot of myself, so I set out to change that.”

Since its premiere at the 2022 Vancouver International Film Festival, “Golden Delicious” has been able to reach many audience members, some



Post-screening Q&A with David Siev. / Courtesy Eddie Vo

of which are queer and Asian.

“What’s really nice about the film is it’s connecting with a broad audience and it’s inspiring queer agents specifically to speak up and share their stories,” Karman said. “It means the film is empowering them, it’s making them feel hopeful. They’re not alone.”

Due to the scarcity of queer Asian movies, it was imperative for Karman that the film had an optimistic ending. LGBTQ movies historically have had tragic endings, so “Golden Delicious” would need to leave audiences optimistic.

“I specifically chose a happy ending for this film because I wanted to give hope to the younger generation that watches the film—I want them to feel like they can find a Prince Charming,” Karman said. “Some people say that’s unrealistic, but why not? Why does everything have to be miserable and unhappy? We already know how hard life is.”

David Siev’s debut documentary Bad Axe closed out the festival. The movie compiles footage Siev took of his family during the COVID-19 pandemic, documenting their struggles with running a family restaurant against racial tensions in the town of Bad Axe, MI.

Featured in the film are his Cambodian father Chun, his Mexican-American mother Rachel, his sisters Jacqueline and Rachel, and his in-laws. Chun escaped the Khmer Rouge regime as a child and migrated to the U.S., where the family started a restaurant business—David knew his

family had a unique story that needed to be told. The pandemic was a great opportunity to document them, since it was hard to film anything else.

Siev faced many trials in the production of the film. He launched a Kickstarter campaign in the early stages of the project. Because Bad Axe is such a small community, everyone was familiar with everyone—the Sievs were especially visible as the only Cambodian-Mexican-American family.

The movie focuses substantially on political polarization and racism within Bad Axe, which many community members were unhappy with. “Some members of the community felt like it was showing all the worst parts of Bad Axe, which I don’t think is true,” he said. “People were leaving Facebook comments, were stopping my mom in Walmart telling her they weren’t going to support the restaurant anymore.”

As this was Siev’s feature directorial debut, he found it difficult to finance the film. He secured some funding through writing grant essays, but had to take money out of his own pocket.

“A week before South by Southwest, I maxed out all my credit cards, I had \$101.99 in my bank account, and I had no idea how I was going to pay rent that month,” he said. “I went broke doing this film, and I was totally okay with that. For me, the investment was about telling our story, and having something I could share with my own kids one day.”

The investment proved successful,

earning various awards throughout its ongoing festival run. The movie is even anticipated to compete at next year’s Oscars.

Before taking the film to festivals, Siev was determined to screen the documentary at the eponymous town. Most of the seats were reserved for donors, but 20 to 30 seats were left open, many which were filled by initially-skeptical audience members.

Overwhelmingly, the movie swayed opinion.

“Pretty much every single one of those people came up to either me or my mom or my sister after the film, and they said sorry,” Siev said. “That truly proved to me the power cinema has to start change in a community, because I was witnessing it firsthand.”

“Golden Delicious” and “Bad Axe” both support BAAFF’s mission of creating dialogue about intersectional issues. Through representing underseen communities, independent cinema has the ability to strengthen a community.

“I wanted to create a space where people felt they could be themselves and be connected watching film in a community,” Chinsen said. “There’s an unspoken language you can connect to. When you get reactions in the audience, it makes you feel like you’re not alone. That there is a safe space here in Boston is a really important thing to let people feel seen.”

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Sports

Women's volleyball season ends in five-set heartbreaker

Leo Kagan
Beacon Staff

A final ball whistled past diving Emerson defenders, silencing a roaring crowd at the Bobbi Brown and Steven Plofker Gym on Tuesday night, ending a tight 3-2 match against Smith College in the NEWMAC quarterfinals. After a successful 18-4 regular season, the Lions were surprised to fall in the first round of the conference playoffs to the Pioneers, who they beat 3-0 less than a month ago. Senior middle blocker Jillian Kay said the team believed in themselves from start to finish. “We never expected that,” Kay said. “Not once did we expect that outcome. The whole game, it felt like we were up.” Head Coach Ben Read explained that the Pioneers adjusted their strategy to expose some of the Lions’ weaknesses. “Smith changed their block,” he said. “They did a good job of blocking the line, and we just couldn’t get hit around [it].” Kay added that the presence of Smith’s 6-foot-5 middle blocker Miranda Oakes—who tallied five blocks—totally changed the game for Emerson. “I remember last time we played them... they didn’t use her in the middle,” Kay said. “She was able to get up right above the net and have a big block.” Emerson started the game strong, cleanly winning the first set 25-15—capitalizing on Smith’s nine errors. It wouldn’t last long though, as the Lions made nine errors of their own in the second, dropping the set 25-20. The Lions returned to the court for the third set with passion, play-



Photo Arthur Mansavage

ing scrappy volleyball en route to a decisive 25-15 victory which saw players diving across the court to deny the opposition from scoring. Read said although the final result didn’t go the Lions’ way, no one could criticize the team’s effort. “[It was] through the roof,” he said. “There was no lack of effort from anyone. It comes down to lack of execution sometimes, but we gave it our all tonight. Couldn’t be prouder.” Despite leading the game after three frames, the Lions collapsed in the final two. Dropping the last two sets 25-18 and 15-9, the Lions couldn’t generate any consistent rhythm. Senior middle hitter Logan Steenbergen said it felt like the Pioneers threw the brakes on their attack flow. “[They were] shutting down our momentum,” they said. “I don’t think we played poorly. But

I think they just stole the momentum out from underneath us.” Their imposing presence at the front of the net proved key to the Pioneers’ defense—in the final two sets Smith logged 15 of its 23 blocks. Emerson tallied just 14 all night long. Steenbergen said the Pioneers’ block was half the problem—the other half was the Lions’ stubborn resistance to shifting their strategy. “We shifted to tipping over and around the block a little bit too late,” Steenbergen said. “We kept trying to pound through and that wasn’t working.” Despite the Lions’ lack of success in the last two sets, they wouldn’t go down without a fight. After allowing Smith to go on a 6-1 run to start the final set, the Lions clawed their way back, drawing the set as close as 6-4 before the Pioneers stamped-

ed back in, scoring seven consecutive tallies to make it 13-4. Even then, the Lions made it difficult, adding five more points before the game officially ended. The finish devastated the team, particularly the eight seniors—the remaining players from the 2019-20 team that made a run to the NEWMAC Championship before losing to Babson. Senior defensive specialist Anna Phillips said she will remember those players and this team fondly. “Being able to [play] with this incredible group of girls who put their best work in every single day has easily been one of my best memories,” she said. “We always do karaoke night [for] bonding. [I’ll remember] just playing the sport that we all love.” Kay said the team’s stiff resistance all the way to the finish made the confirmation of

defeat that much more painful. “[It] was a surreal moment,” she said. “You could hear everyone in the crowd cheering and saying ‘Let’s go Lions,’ and then that ball hit the floor. And it was just like, wow, now my volleyball career is over.” Steenbergen said they too didn’t come to grips with the end of their career until that final moment. “The first thing I thought was, ‘I’m gonna have to find something else to do,’” they said. “I’ve been playing volleyball since I was 9 years old. It’s all I’ve ever done. My impending identity crisis just became very real in that moment.” For Kay, the bonds she formed with her teammates will last long beyond her time at Emerson. “They’re with me till the end,” she said. “I know I can count on them. I can call them anytime, even if it’s not volleyball related. Every memory I have with them is precious, and I’m so thankful for my time with Emerson volleyball.” Even amidst a moment of grief, there was optimism. Read noted there is always next year, and with a young crop of talent developing this year, next year will yield a strong team. “We’ll graduate some very impressive seniors, but we also have some very impressive underclassmen,” he said. “We can keep learning from these experiences, and that’s gonna make us better next year.” On Tuesday, however, no one was looking forward to next year. For the Lions, it was all about the end of an era—the end for the seniors.

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Women's soccer clinches quarterfinal win

Cont. from Pg. 1

In the second half, the Lions picked up where they left off, keeping high possession and attempting numerous shots on goal, but the match would soon change in the 78th minute when Wheaton’s Sadie Recht floated the ball into the goal on a misplay into the box by the Lions’ defense to tie the game 1-1. Regulation time eventually ran out and the game transitioned into overtime—in the NEWMAC, two 10-minute halves. Just four minutes into extra time, Wheaton took the lead off the boot of Lily Brown but Emerson kept a positive mindset heading into the second half of overtime. “Obviously we’re one down and the way we were framing it was ‘They scored, so can we,’” Bruce said. The Lions had two shots—one saved and one off-target—and the clock was ticking down. In the 110th minute, a deflected shot landed at the feet of junior midfielder Simone Barragan-Shaw, which she placed in the back of the net to equalize the score 2-2. As the team celebrated, they knew penalty kicks were pend-



Photo Danny Kennedy

ing, but Johnston had other ideas. “We’re high-fiving each other and I just look at Cali, I look at [senior defender] Bellamy [Suter] like ‘Oh my god, we need to get this,’ I don’t want it to be up in the air,” she said. Johnston intercepted a poor pass from the Wheaton fullback, then dribbled forward and pressed into the box, facing a Wheaton

goalie who, at this point, tallied 11 saves on the night. Johnston kept her composure and slotted the ball into the back right corner, sending Rotch into a frenzy. Families cheered and the men’s soccer team—who was in attendance—raced to the other side of the field to celebrate. The announcer counted down the seconds, and

when it was all said and done, the Lions were moving on. Screaming ‘Let’s go!’ Johnston was in the middle of the huddle in one of the most special moments of her soccer career. “It was the craziest thing ever,” she said. “Not only my whole team hugging each other at the goal but then seeing the men’s team just rush down near and just cheering for us. I’ve never felt more supported and loved on the field.” Johnston and the team’s five seniors extended their collegiate careers at least one more game, but Johnston, who has battled injuries in the past—including an ACL tear that ended her senior season—knows what it’s like to play her last game. “When I tore my ACL, I left that game and I knew this possibly could be my last game ever,” she said. “I’m just so grateful to have found a place on this team where I can play every game with girls that love it as much as I do.” Bruce has been a captain for the past three years and the miracle win could be her final game at Rotch, but she was proud it was a thrilling victory. “It means a lot to have gone through this journey with people that I’ve been with for four years,” Bruce said. “I’ve grown

as a person and a soccer player and it’s a special team.” When Suvak took over the reins of the women’s soccer team in 2010, there was much work to do. Aside from recruiting and piecing together this ‘special team’ with assistant coach Colin Connolly, this win marked the 100th he would share with the Lady Lions. “It has me reflecting on games in the past,” Suvak said about the milestone. “So many players that have created this program and so many really great young women to just be involved in the success. It’s been great.” The team surprised its coach with a Gatorade shower and balloons. But with their celebrations ending, the Lions look toward the semifinals on Thursday, when they’ll travel to face No. 2 Babson—a match-up they drew 0-0 earlier this season. Suvak said defense will be a high priority, but Bruce added they’ll be entering the game making sure they wear their hearts on their sleeves. “Our game plan is the same for every game and that is to play the best we can,” Bruce said. “To give everything on the field and leave with no regrets.”

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